


# Cooperative Learning Seminar

Brian and Warwick, November 2014

Cooperation





*“Language and  
Culture cannot be  
disentangled.”*

(Professor Vincent; speaking about students in  
Taipei in EV seminar, Tianmu Elementary School)

# ➤ Looking Forward



What is our role as teachers?

Is it to teach our students English, maths, science, history, and so forth?

Or, is to help move our students from childhood into adulthood?

I hope that it is a combination of both of these.

On one level we are teaching our students to read and write and do maths.

# ➤ Becoming Adults



But, on another level we are teaching them how to become adults.

And, of what relevance is this to cooperative learning?

Well, it is not just what we teach to our students now, but also how we teach them, that will influence our future society.

# ➤ What sort of future society do we want?



Which leads us to the next question; “what sort of future society do we want, or do you want?”

Communist China has been in the news lately for a particular reason.

There is a conversation currently going on in Communist China about the society there moving from a “**copy**” society to a “**creative**” society and how they can best do this.

# ➤ "Do" or "Think" ???



I personally believe that this is a good conversation to have, but how do you change a society from one where the people are trained just **"to do"**, to one where the people are able to **"think"** for themselves and ask the question **"why"** ..... ???

# ➤ The Industrial Revolution



Copying other people's ideas has made Communist China a lot of money in the past, but if they are to develop as a modern society and move into the future, then they have to be able to move beyond this old way.

**The Industrial Revolution** is a force that even the Chinese Communist Party cannot control!

# ➤ Innovations



Of course, the leaders in Taiwan are aware of this and are trying hard not to be left behind with an out-of-date society.

The two obvious innovations so far are the introduction of the English Villages across Taipei City, and now the push to introduce Cooperative Learning into schools.



# ➤ Future vs History



So; where do I start?

I like to tell stories, so let me start with a story.

Back in Australia, I taught in a university for a while.

Not as the professor, but as the teacher for the tutorial-class groups that are held after the big weekly lectures within the faculty of education.

Yes; I was helping to educate the new teachers!

## ➤ What do you want to happen?

This was interesting, but what was even more interesting was the subject being taught.

The subject was “*Futures*”, which is best understood by thinking of it as the opposite of “*History*”.

Instead of looking back at what has happened, you look forwards to what you want to happen.

# ➤ Agents of Change



Teachers are agents of change!

What sort of schools do we want; what sort of classrooms do we want; what sort of students do we want, are all very important questions, because as teachers we project our attitudes and beliefs onto our students.

Our students are the future, so the students we “create”, determines the future we “create”.

In effect; WE create the future!

Study, Study, Study ...



# ➤ Questionnaire



**Directions:** *write a short response to the following questions.*

1. What is your own personal teaching philosophy, or teaching style?

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2. What do you personally think is the main reason for introducing cooperative learning into schools in Taiwan?

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3. Give your personal rating to this initiative by placing a mark on the number line. (I.e. the introduction of cooperative learning into schools in Taiwan)

-5 = very bad  
+5 = very good  
0 = neutral

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 +5

“Who can tell me the answer?”



# ➤ Theoretical Underpinnings #1



## New Zealand research paper in cooperative learning

Johnson and Johnson postulate, moreover, that experience in cooperative education is essential for an individual's healthy psychological development (*Johnson & Johnson, 1998*).

Researchers suggest also that cooperative learning prepares students for the modern workforce where there is an increased emphasis on team work (*Fiechter & Davis, 1991*), and for their meaningful participation in a democratic society (*Kagan, 1994*).

## ➤ Theoretical Underpinnings #2



(New Zealand research paper in cooperative learning, continued)

Johnson and Johnson (1998) warned that simply putting students in groups and telling them to cooperate would not produce the desired outcomes; there were certain pre conditions that must be present for real learning to occur; these pre conditions are positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills and group processing.

Researchers began to highlight the need for students to be trained in handling group issues (*Oakley et al, 2004*) and the need for teachers themselves to be given guidance in training students for group work (*Ward 2006*).



# ➤ Theoretical Underpinnings #3



(New Zealand research paper in cooperative learning, continued)

Asian students are accustomed to an educational system which is teacher centred; dialogic (relating to dialogue) teaching methods, including cooperative learning, favoured by New Zealand educational institutions can leave them feeling confused and disoriented (*Holmes, 2005*).

## ➤ Theoretical Underpinnings #4



(New Zealand research paper in cooperative learning, continued)

Asian society does not encourage disagreement, so reluctance to participate in group interaction and difficulty in managing interpersonal skills within a learning group can be a natural consequence of the cultural disorientation felt by these students

*(Holmes 2002; Campbell & Li, 2007).*

# ➤ Theoretical Underpinnings #5



(New Zealand research paper in cooperative learning, continued)

According to Campbell and Li (2007) many Asian students in their research project “*felt they had been abandoned and that they were asked to produce more than they had been taught*” (p85).

# ➤ Contemporary Education in Australia:



Students are 'taught' how to think and work cooperatively from the beginning of elementary school.

For example:

- Sitting in groups as normal classroom practice and procedure
- Assuming a range of roles
- Changing in and out of various roles
- Respecting the position or role of others in the group
- Peer pressure to manage behaviour within the group

## ➤ Contemporary Education in Australia:



By the time students get to grade seven (compare Taiwan grade 6) they are able to:

- Identify goals
- Formulate a plan
- Work towards a conclusion
- Present the group's findings

# Brian's early days ... !!!



# Take a Break !!!



# What's going on .. !!!









## ➤ Assessment

For the most part, assessment has moved away from traditional 'pen and paper' tests and quizzes, to demonstrations of competency through a range of means.

These include portfolios of work collected over the unit of work, or over the semester; speeches; websites; poster presentations; PowerPoint presentations with talk; dramas; etc.

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences underpins the thinking that students' intelligence can be in a range of areas and cannot realistically be reduced down to a single figure that can then be used to directly compare students.

## ➤ Time Perspective



There is a saying in English that it takes a long time to turn the ship.

Cooperative learning represents a major change in direction for education here in Taiwan and will not happen overnight.

It will take a long time, but a start needs to be made and this is what we are doing today!

Student education **AND** teacher education will take time and an understanding and acceptance of this fact is vitally important.

## ➤ Teachers' Beliefs



**“Our beliefs inform our behaviours”**

Or, to put it another way, *‘what we think about comes about’*.

What we put within ourselves is much more important than what we put on the wall.

I.e. Our beliefs carry more weight than any slogan will!

Why do we do what we do in the classroom? ... It's because of what we believe!

We need to think about, be aware of, and be careful of what we actually believe.

Is *Cooperative Learning* an external imposition, or something internal that we own and have a stake in?

How we answer this question will greatly affect the effectiveness of this initiative.

➤ *"When the group wins; I win"*

## Cooperative versus Competitive Learning

Competitive = I win when you lose. (Only one winner)

Cooperative = I win when the group wins. (Many winners)

I believe that this fact alone will be the biggest impediment to the successful implementation of cooperative learning here in Taiwan.

## ➤ "What about the parents?"



You all know better than I do that the power and influence of the parents within the schools here is way out of proportion.

Many parents are selfish and only want their own son or daughter to 'win', even at the expense of the other students!

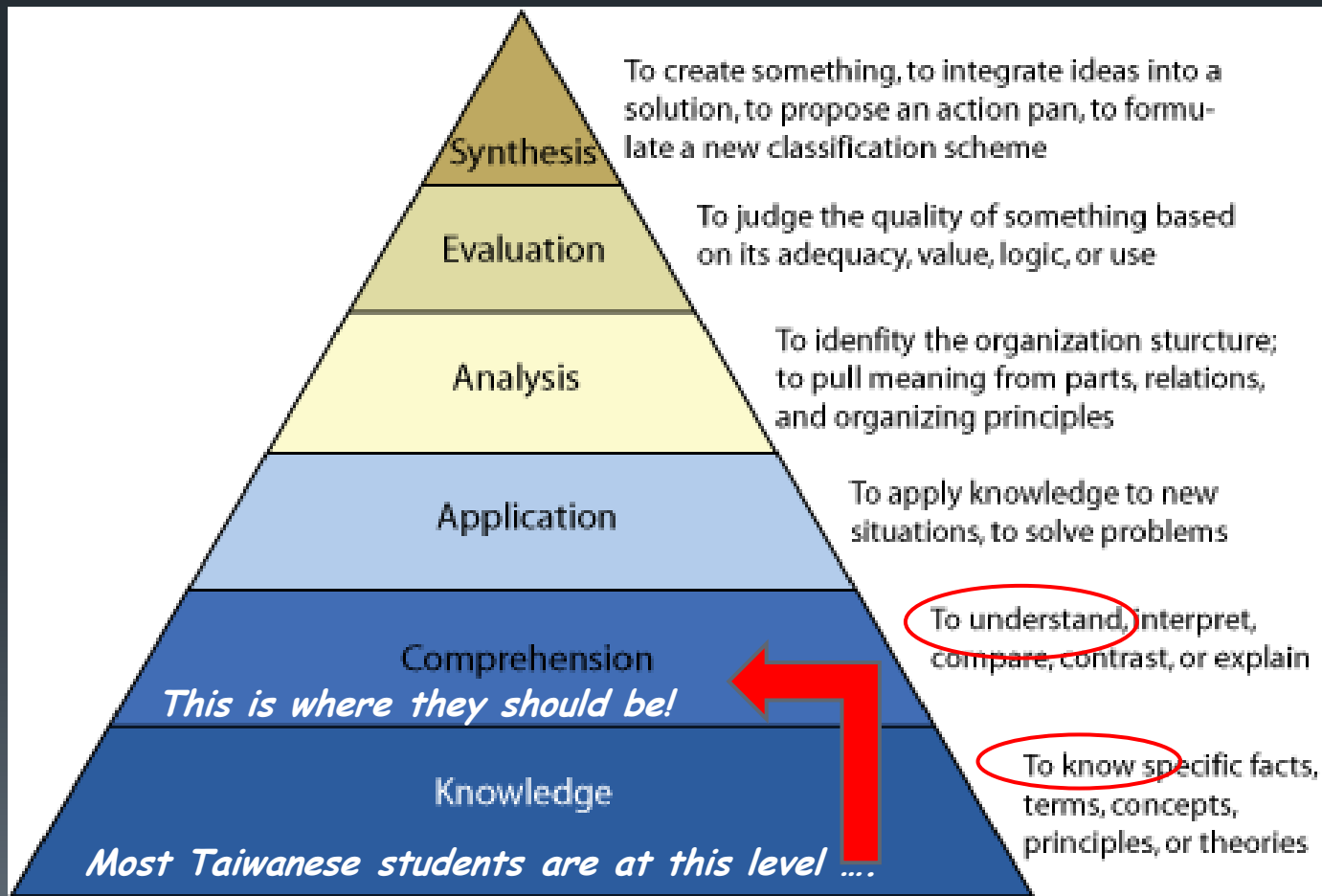
To get them to agree to a system where their child now needs to cooperate with other students to work towards a common goal and share the 'win' may be somewhat ambitious !

# ➤ Bloom's Taxonomy



Thinking is a skill that needs to be taught.

Refer *Bloom's Taxonomy*;





## ➤ “The ability to think independently”



In *Bloom's Taxonomy*; the bottom level is “**Knowledge**”. Here, the teacher gives the students something, the students memorise it, and then they give it back to the teacher in the test.

Is there any understanding?

Maybe yes; maybe no!

To move up to at least the next level, “**Comprehension**”, the students need to be able to think independently and logically to gain some understanding.

By its very nature, cooperative learning requires students to be able to think.

## ➤ Confucius and Socrates



I will share some history here and compare Eastern Philosophical Tradition, dating back to Confucius, on the one hand, and Western Philosophical Tradition, dating back to Socrates and Plato, on the other.

The main difference would be this; Confucius shared his wisdom and insights – *listen and learn*, whereas the Greek philosophers did not claim to know a great body of knowledge, but rather perfected a way of getting to the truth – *keep asking questions!*

## ➤ Keep searching for the truth



To paraphrase; Eastern Philosophic tradition means listen and learn, whereas Western Philosophic Tradition mean keep searching and you will find the truth.

I guess that pretty much sums up

A Taiwanese friend told me once how it wasn't until she reached college that she really needed to think in class !!!!!

## ➤ Locus of Control

Our '**locus of control**', or where our own control is centred, can be located within us or it can be located outside of us.

What does this mean?

When our locus of control is located within us, our 'centre of power' is within us and we have the power and we take responsibility for our own behaviour.

However, when our locus of control is located outside us, someone else has the power, and the responsibility for our behaviour is taken away from us and we must just obey.

# ➤ Responsible People?



What this means for our students is this; are they able to manage their own behaviour?

Or, do they need an external locus, their teacher, to constantly guide them?

Maybe a strict teacher will keep their students in order, but when the strict teacher is not there, are the students able to manage their own behaviour ... usually not!

Our role as teachers should not just be to teach our students reading and writing, maths, English, science etc. but also how to become responsible people.

## ➤ Success ???



So, taken right down to a cooperative learning situation, we often need to step back and allow the students to *'work as a group'*.

If the students cannot manage their own behaviour and constantly need the teacher to guide them, then any attempts at cooperative learning will be less than successful.

## ➤ "Fair and Clear" ???



**Externally imposed scoring (behaviour management) systems for the group:**

- we need to be very careful that they are fair and clear and relate to the whole group.
- Better to reward good behaviour immediately, than to punish bad behaviour after the fact!

# ➤ The Role does not equal the person



“Disconnect the role from the person”

When roles are shared and changed regularly within the group, the students come to realise that they and the other students possess their own identity separate from the role that they may be filling.



## ➤ Who are you ???

The students come to realise that their role does not define them i.e. they are not stereotyped or type-casted as always being the “leader”, “speaker”, “writer”, etc.

Today you may be the “manager”, but tomorrow you may be the “writer”.

Roles are just that; roles that you learn to step into and step out of.

There is a real “**you**” separate from the role.

# ➤ Discussion Time



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
ASK MORE  
QUESTIONS



.....???